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## SOCIALIZING SCHOOL PROCEDURE

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### THE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF PUPILS

The emphasis upon the motivation of instruction has centered our attention upon the ways of handling the so-called social activities of the school. Where pupils are free to organize and carry on their own activities everything is done under the "urge" of strong motives. Pupils frequently originate and carry out purposes very difficult to achieve. Usually pupils are more efficient in their social activities than in their regular class work. This is due not only to the presence of stronger motives impelling them to action but also to the method of the procedure in their social activities.

Opportunities for individual participation are abundantly provided in their social activities. Each individual participates either as a leader, or as an active supporter, or as an opponent of a leader. His activities are measured by the effect he can produce upon the members of his group. His parley is with his equals rather than with the teacher, who is raised to an unequal vantage ground by virtue of her age, training, and official position. The pupil has the dignity and responsibilities of a citizen rather than the submissiveness and awe, or perchance the indifference or the rebelliousness of a subject. His achievements are significant to him and are to be maintained by careful thinking and increased efforts. He takes his failures seriously and retrieves them as soon as possible. Standards of thinking and conduct are gradually evolved.

If such a democratic method of procedure works well in organized play, dramatics, debating, literary societies, musical clubs, class organizations, school papers, etc., why would it not work equally well in the regular work of the school? To what extent

may the free play ways of working on the part of pupils' social organizations be used efficiently in instruction?

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE REGULAR ACTIVITIES OF  
THE SCHOOL

1. *Class work.*—It is a recognized principle of teaching that the pupil's natural and relatively unhampered attack upon the lesson is an essential condition of successful learning. By natural attack is not meant the absence of definite purpose in the attack nor of guiding suggestions by the teacher, but it does imply the removal of authoritative directions and prescriptions into the background. For example, a teacher of a sixth-grade geography class made an assignment as follows: "I want you to read very carefully pages 14 to 22 in your book, which deal with the productions of Texas. You will notice that considerable cotton is grown in Texas. Why? You will also notice that practically no cotton is manufactured into cloth in Texas. Why? Where is the cotton, which is grown in Texas, manufactured? Why?" Such an assignment prevents the natural and unhampered attack by the pupils. It requires the pupils to look up the answers to a few questions proposed by the teacher, and to find reasons for their answers if possible. Of course such an assignment would be better than telling the pupils that they are to study pages 14 to 22 and learn all about the productions of Texas. The former assignment is definite, but it dictates the tasks in detail, robs the pupils of their motives for work, and limits their opportunities for thinking, while the latter assignment is not even definite.

An assignment calculated to secure the natural attack by the pupils might run as follows: "We have been studying the productions of New England and we have seen how many things were manufactured there which were grown or found in the earth somewhere else. Let us see what we can discover about the productions of Texas. Where shall we find information about the productions of Texas?" The pupils will suggest several sources, including their geography textbook. After a little preliminary reading some pupil may say, "I find that cotton is grown in large quantities in Texas, but I haven't found out what is done with it."

Another pupil presently volunteers the information that cotton is not manufactured into cloth in Texas. Another suggests that it is shipped to the eastern states to be manufactured, while someone verifies this statement by finding a similar statement in the geography textbook, encyclopedia, or other sources of information. Finally some pupil says, "I don't see why Texas should not manufacture her own cotton." This question sets the problem of the lesson, and all pupils of the class go to work on it to find a complete answer. In such an assignment the pupils participate to the full extent of their abilities. After an assignment similar to that described above, a pupil worked out in the study period the following answer to the question, "Why are there no cotton mills in Texas?"

The reason there are no cotton mills in Texas is because there are very few rivers. The rivers they do have do not carry a steady volume of water. Sometimes there is not enough water to run the mills, and at other times there are floods.

They could use coal for power, but there are a very few coal mines in Texas. The coal would be harder to ship than the cotton.

Texas is a very good place to raise cattle, and people ought to raise cattle instead of putting in cotton mills.

It takes very many people to work in cotton mills, and being a farming state Texas isn't very densely populated.

The machinery would have to be sent a long way to be put into the mills, because there are very few, if any, iron mines in Texas.

There are a few cotton mills in the South, but the East still ranks ahead.

The ready-to-wear garments are made in the North and the East rather than in the South. For this reason, it is easier to have mills in the East than in the South. There are more people in the East than in the South to buy the garments.

I think it's best to have our cotton mills in the eastern states and have Texas do what she can best do; that is, raise cattle.

Careful observation of the pupil's natural attack upon his school work puts the teacher in a position to detect difficulties as soon as they are encountered, and also in the position of mediator to help him work successfully. For example, one pupil while working on the problem in a supervised study period told his teacher that he didn't see why Texas shouldn't manufacture cotton into cloth, because it would cost more to ship the raw cotton

away than it would to manufacture the product. The teacher answered, "How would the power to run the mills be produced?" Thereupon the pupil looked for rivers and coal as sources of power, but both of these sources were found to be wanting or impracticable.

Ordinarily a great deal of the recitation time is taken up in asking questions calculated to test pupils on what they have studied more or less without purpose. A formal assignment of the next lesson is made by the teacher, either at the beginning or the end of the recitation. Sometimes the pupils are drilled upon some portion of the lesson in hand, but the whole procedure is characterized by the direct and single leadership of the teacher attempting to hold each pupil responsible for having learned the facts of the subject-matter previously assigned and studied. Were the teacher to be suddenly called away from the recitation at any time, the work would cease. Under such conditions a class does not work as an organized group, but rather as a number of individuals each one of whom is personally and solely responsible to the teacher. On the other hand, when the pupils are engaged largely in directing their own activities, the absence of any pupil from the class, although he may be the leader for the time does not stop the work of the group. During several days' absence of their teacher an instance of self-directed group activity in English composition was shown by an eighth-grade class by planning, writing, editing, and publishing an issue of the junior high school paper. This number was as good in subject-matter and arrangement, and a little better in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, etc., than any previous issue. This result would have been impossible if the members of the class had not been accustomed to work together in a group. Again, the ordinary class recitation and study procedure tend to increase the activities of the teacher out of all proportion to those of the pupils. The following reported recitation illustrates a frequent procedure. This recitation is also a fine illustration of the absence of a single purpose on the part of the pupils.

The following topics were written on the board. A record of the class procedure for the entire period is too long to publish

in this article. The method of the recitation, however, is clearly shown in the development of the second topic, which follows.

Discovering of America by the Norsemen  
Capture of Constantinople by the Turks  
First voyage of Columbus  
John Cabot discoveries in America  
End of Magellan's voyage around the world  
Founding of St. Augustine  
Defeat of the Spanish Armada  
Settlement of Jamestown  
Quebec settled by the French  
New Netherlands settled by the Dutch  
Slavery introduced in Virginia  
Settlement of Plymouth  
Settlement of Boston

*Teacher:* Let us take the second question now, "Capture of Constantinople by the Turks." Floyd, you tell us about that.

*Floyd:* All I know about it is that the Turks . . . . [*Pauses*].

*Teacher:* Let me help you a little bit. Where did these people learn about these spices?

*Pupil:* They learned from the traders over there. They came over from Constantinople. Came over in caravans, but the Turks captured Constantinople, and so all these Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French tried to find some other way of getting around there.

*Teacher:* Good. There is a point he didn't tell me. How did these people, the English, French, Portuguese, and so on, learn to want these spices?

*Pupil:* They could keep meat with spices.

*Teacher:* Yes, they could preserve meats, and what else? To make flavor. But how did they learn about these spices?

*Pupil:* Some traders came from over here in the Indies and over there. Then these people went down there.

*Teacher:* You have forgotten something that was so interesting. [*Pupils try to think*]. I want to know when these people first came into contact with these spices.

*Pupil:* Didn't they have a war down there?

*Another pupil:* The Crusades. [*Triumphantly*].

*First pupil:* I know, but I thought they had a war down there.

*Teacher:* Where did the Crusaders go?

*Pupil:* Down right in there around Constantinople.

*Teacher:* Down in here? [*Pointing to Constantinople*].

*Pupil:* Lower than that.

*Teacher:* But tell me what they wanted down there.

*Pupil:* Holy Land, where Christ had been.

*Teacher:* That's it. They wanted to capture Jerusalem. How many crusades were there?

*Pupils:* Three.

*Teacher:* Do you remember any great men who went? [*Children try to think and refer to several people but cannot remember the names.*]

*Teacher:* Richard, the Lion Hearted. You say there was a priest? [*Gives name.*] And it was when they were down here in the Holy Land that they first learned to use these spices. Now who was it that was holding the Holy Land?

*Pupils:* Turks.

*Teacher:* Just think, all of you, how long had they had this land?

*Pupils* [*Counting*]: Five hundred and thirty-five years—four hundred and sixty-five years.

*Teacher:* Well, which is it? Four or three? I guess I must do it myself. [*Figures on board.*] Four hundred and sixty-five years then the Turks held Constantinople. Now the question is, Who is going to have the Holy Land after this war?

*Pupil:* No, they are going to make a separate land out of it, with their own government.

*Teacher:* All right, they are going to call it "International Territory." Why call it that?

*Pupils:* All of them own it, because all Christians believe in it.

*Teacher:* Another reason? It is the outlet for what country?

*Pupils:* Russia.

*Teacher:* Is Russia a great coming country? You know we have some people in this country who say that the greatest country in the world to be is Russia, and have you read any other suggestions about America in Russia at the close of this war?

*Pupil:* Yes, because it is good land over there to raise wheat.

*Teacher:* What is the great need in Russia today?

*Pupil:* Something to bring them up. Men, government.

*Another pupil:* Good government. Then men who know how to work.

*Third pupil:* Men to back it up. Men to make good instruments.

*Teacher:* Yes, it will be a good place for us to ship farm implements. Did you know that we make the best farm implements of any country in the world? Therefore we will have a wonderful opening in Russia. All right. Let's go on with the first voyage of Columbus, Carl.

2. *The work of the school as a whole.*—In the upper grades of a certain elementary school thrift clubs or groups were organized to study the needs of purchasing Thrift Stamps, the value of Thrift Stamps as an investment, ways of earning and saving money with which to purchase Thrift Stamps, etc. The mathematics of arith-

metic was used to compute interest on the investments in Thrift Stamps and Liberty Bonds, to determine the incomes from various kinds of work which the pupils undertook, to keep their individual daybooks of earnings and expenditures, and finally to make up their classified accounts, to the end that pupils might make better plans for earning and saving. Oral composition was used as a means of exchanging the individual experiences of pupils regarding the various phases of the thrift project. Written composition was used in writing articles for the school paper on the subject of thrift. Elementary science was an important instrument in stimulating and directing the development of home gardens, the incomes from which were used to buy stamps. Home-garden study was also used in connection with food-conservation projects and producing, and saving food.

The general project of producing articles for the Red Cross was organized into a number of minor projects. In the first place the school organized its campaign for memberships; the membership fees were collected by a committee appointed by the pupils, and an application was written by this committee to the proper official to make the school a regular auxiliary of the Junior Red Cross. When the application was granted, this committee received materials for a Red Cross banner, the certificate of membership for the school, and the membership buttons. Another committee was appointed by the school to arrange for the appropriate ceremony when the school was to be made an auxiliary of the Junior Red Cross and give publicity to the occasion. Another committee was appointed to keep the school informed regarding the suggestions and directions sent by the Red Cross officials for making articles. This committee was made up of boys taking manual training and girls taking home economics and both boys and girls taking drawing. The members of this committee took their plans for work into the drawing classes. The girls also developed their plans in the home-economics classes and the boys in the manual-training classes where the actual work of producing the Red Cross articles was performed. Before the auxiliary could be formally installed, designs for the banner had been made in the drawing classes. The committee decided which was the best



design, and the banner was made in the home-economics classes. The boys made the wooden rod and staff for carrying the banner in the manual-training classes. The boys also made the large wooden needles needed by the girls for their knitting work.

Still another committee was appointed to purchase materials to be used in making articles, to keep the entire financial account of the auxiliary, and to make regular reports of expenditures and articles produced, to the school and to the adult educational committee of the Junior Red Cross. This committee also carried its work into the arithmetic and English classes. The bulletins of the Junior Red Cross and the Red Cross magazines were studied in the English classes to keep up interest and to furnish information regarding the services which the pupils were undertaking to render. Thus it happened that a number of the subjects of the school were requisitioned for service in the Junior Red Cross by the school as a whole.

3. *School discipline and planning.*—In the upper grades of the school previously referred to the principal and teachers decided to give the pupils the opportunity to regulate their own conduct as far as they should prove their ability to do so. Accordingly a so-called "school-planning period" was placed on the school's program of activities. This was a period in which the pupils of each grade or of all the upper grades together should discuss and act upon matters of general welfare to the school. The pupils were told that this period could be devoted to anything which they thought ought to be done.

As was expected, the pupils had little to say or do at first. During the first two or three weeks of the school-planning period the pupils plied their teachers with questions and discussed with each other the meaning of this sudden innovation. Gradually they began to find something to do. While the VIII-A class in hygiene was discussing matters of personal cleanliness, one boy ventured to remark that many of the things about which they talked in class and agreed ought to be done were not really done by many members of the class, including himself, and by members of other classes. From this remark it was suggested by another pupil that something ought to be done in the school-planning period

to remedy matters of this sort. After a considerable discussion this grade appointed a clean-up committee. This committee met and formulated a few rules regarding the ordinary violations of personal cleanliness and appearance, and these rules were accepted by the class. By an autocratic assumption of power the class made its rules applicable to all the pupils of the school. Accordingly the code of rules was signed by the committee and posted on the school bulletin board, together with a suggestive note that all violators of these rules would be waited upon by the committee. Desirable results were immediately forthcoming. The personal appearance of many boys and girls showed marked improvement the day following the posting of the rules. Occasionally the committee found it expedient to speak to a boy about the condition of his hair, hands, ears, or shoes but no test cases developed.

The existence of a clean-up committee organization suggested to another grade the appointment of a housekeeping committee, and to another the organization of a grounds committee, and to still another that of a committee on general conduct. The committee on general conduct was soon confronted with a test case. A certain boy had told an untruth, which the pupils called a "whopper," in an attempt to secure some personal advantage. He was admonished by the committee regarding what such conduct would lead to, but with apparently no effect. The question as to what could be done in a case of this kind or in any case where the pupil refused to take the advice of a committee arose. This question was discussed in the school-planning period of several grades and finally of all grades meeting together. It was decided that there should be officers who could, after due deliberation, impose sentence. The body to be clothed with this authority was constituted by each room electing four of its number, two boys and two girls, who were to sit, hold trial, and sentence. This committee was called the "School Senate." The first case on the "docket" was that of the boy who had told the "whopper." The committee on general school conduct entered its complaint and the Senate held a solemn and dignified trial. The accused, having no defense to make, was sentenced. His offense had occurred on the playground, and therefore he was deprived of his

play at recess time for one week. Much to the surprise of the other pupils, however, the prisoner broke sentence. Again the Senate convened and meted out a second punishment more severe than the first, and again the culprit refused to obey. Before taking further action the Senate called in a teacher to inquire whether it really had authority to enforce their rules. When advised that it did, it informed the persistent lawbreaker that if he refused to serve his sentence any longer he would be required to sever his connection with the school. This conquered the boy, but not his mother, who felt that her son was being misused and decided to transfer him to another school. The boy, however, had not fought and lost his battle for nothing, and he came to the teachers begging them to ask his mother not to transfer him. Finally through the combined influence of the teachers and the boy's father the mother was persuaded to allow him to remain. As a result of this experience the boy's conduct was markedly improved. There were other cases, but none that required the influence of the teachers.

The membership of the School Senate and the various committees changed every month, giving a large number of pupils a chance to hold office. At one time, when the pupils were electing a new committee, much to the surprise of their teachers they elected one of the worst violators of the previous committee's work, and when the new committee was organized for business he was made its chairman. The pupils thought that responsibility would sober him down, and they were right, for he turned out to be one of the best officers and law-abiding citizens of the school.

More and more each pupil came to regard himself as responsible not only for his own conduct but also for that of others; and yet they did not take advantage of each other. There was little quibbling over small things. "Snitchers," "tattle-talers," and "peachers" were frowned upon. However, to help enforce the standards of the school community was the duty of every citizen in private as well as in public life, and any information given to the proper authorities leading to the apprehension and the reformation of the violators of these standards was considered

a social duty and not in any sense "snitching" or "peaching." A certain girl gave information to the right authorities concerning the conduct of three other girls. The information was correct, and the conduct of the three girls needed attention, which it duly received. However, the informant spread this information broadcast throughout the school. When the time arrived for the session of the Senate, there were four hearings instead of three. The girl who had talked too much was properly reprimanded.

A very small part of the school-planning period time was taken up with the regulation of misconduct. A great deal of the work was concerned with such matters as school garden, lawn, playground plans, athletics, dramatics, class projects in manual training and home economics needed for the school, or any affair which required the collective action of a grade or of a school as a whole to accomplish.

All meetings of pupils were conducted in an orderly and dignified manner. A chairman presided, and only one pupil could speak at a time. The importance of the purposes of these meetings and the formality of the procedure afforded excellent conditions for oral composition. While the teachers had many misgivings as to the outcome of the school-planning activities, all agree that up to date results have surpassed their expectations. The forms of organization used in this school might not work in another school, but what is far more important than particular forms of procedure is the method of their development based upon the group consciousness of the real need of each step. Gradually, as the pupils evolve, through their experience, standards of conduct, there comes a time when they state and define these standards which serve as precepts for future action.